Damage to crops due to radiation from cell phone towers

3241. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether as per preliminary research carried out by some agricultural universities, it has been revealed that the electromagnetic radiation emanating from cell phone towers can damage the growth of agricultural crops and plants;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has since taken any steps to check such damage to agricultural crops and plants from towers of cell phones; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) No, Sir. To our knowledge, no study with respect to damage to the growth of agricultural crops and plants due to electromagnetic radiation emanating from cell phone towers have been conducted by any Agricultural University in India.

(b) to (d) Question does not arise.

Low production of pulses

3242. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India is a largest producer of pulses in the world and also the largest importer of pulses as in the case of oilseeds and edible oils;

(b) whether India's pulse production average is 638 kg. per hectare against best-in-class countries like Canada which produces around 1800 kg, per hectare;

(c) whether a recent study by Tata Strategic Management Group has shown that by adopting best practices and increasing yield to higher levels, India can increase production of pulses 13 million tonnes per year; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The Tata Strategic Management Group in their report published in the Business Standard dated September 24, 2009 claimed that "there is a potential to produce over 37 million tones of pulses in the country". A copy of the report has also been received in the Ministry. The Tata Group has conducted study based on the best practices prevalent in other countries & has recommended for development of markets to ensure profitability; promotion of good agronomic practices; enhanced focus on R&D; area increase involving fallows & improvement in efficiency through aggregation for enhanced production of pulses.

The report further suggested the possibility of yield enhancement by 25% with the use of HYV seeds; 25% with promotion of best pest management practices; 20% with supply of irrigation and nutrients and 15% by ensuing proper storage.

Shortage of irrigation facilities

3243. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken by Government to bring more area under irrigation and improve farm techniques to ensure food security;

(b) the steps taken by Government to upgrade the agriculture-based research and development and developing new crop varieties that are resistant to different weather conditions;

(c) the details thereof; and

(d) in what manner Government is going to help the farmers during the Rabi season particularly in case of shortage of irrigation facilities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (d) Ministry of Water Resources is implementing "Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme" (AIBP) to provide financial assistance to expedite completion of surface- water major and Medium irrigation projects. Central assistance is provided in the form of grant which is 90 percent of the project cost. Funding under programme is made on the basis of proposal made by the State Government. Also, Government is assisting for Promotion of improved method of irrigation like sprinkler and drip irrigation, water intensive crops by less water requiring crops, promotion of System of Rice Intensification (SRI) through crop development schemes of Ministry of Agriculture.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed crop protection/production technologies, improved varieties /hybrids of different crops that are adapted to different weather conditions, amelioration technology for waterlogged, salt affected and acids soil, etc.

In consultation with Ministry of Power, need based additional demand of the States for power supply has been ensured during critical phases of rabi operations, apart from that irrigation/water conservation component scheme such as sprinkler/drips, pumpsets, percolation tanks have been provided under crop development schemes.

Integrated efforts to mitigate impact of drought

3244. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in an effort to provide some relief to people reeling under impact of drought he has asked various Ministries to reconsider imposition of fresh taxes, relax existing taxation and assist States in drought management;